

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 8204

EO 11652: GDS
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SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON JAAFAR SHARIF-EMAMI

SUMMARY: ENGINEER JAAFAR SHARIF-EMAMI, A RESPECTED CONSERVATIVE STATEMAN, HAS BEEN PRESIDENT OF SENATE SINCE 1963. A FORMER PRIME MINISTER (1960-61) WHO WAS OFTEN RUMORED TO BE CANDIDATE FOR THAT OFFICE IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS, HE HAS SINCE PLAYED ROLE OF ELDER STATESMAN, ENJOYING CLOSE TIES WITH SHAH, SENATE, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY. END SUMMARY

1. SHARIF-EMAMI WAS BORN ABOUT 1910 INTO OLD ECCLESIASTICAL FAMILY. HIS FATHER, HAJ MOHAMMAD NEZAM-OLESLAM, WAS A LEADING ISLAMIC CLERGYMAN IN TEHRAN, AND HIS GREAT GRANDFATHER, MIRZA ABUTALEB ESFAHANI, WAS PRIMINENT RELIGIOUS LEADER IN QAJAR PERIOD. ANOTHER GREAT GRANDFATHER, MIRZA ABDOLQASEM HOSSEINI, WAS AN ISFAHAN CLERGYMAN. HIS OWN EDUCATION WAS DEVOTED TO ENGINEERING--THE IRAN-GERMAN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN TEHRAN, GERMAN CENTRALRAILWAY SCHOOL, AND BORAS TECHNICAL SCHOOL IN SWEDEN. HE BEGAN A CAREER WITH IRANIAN STATE RAILWAY IN 1931, AND IN 1942, BECAME ITS

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DEPUTY CHIEF. FOLLOWING ALLED INTERVENTION, HE SPENT TWO YEARS INTERNMENT IN ARAK FOR PRO-GERMAN STANCE. IN POST WAR PERIOD HE WORKED IN PRIVATE CONTRACTING AS HEAD OF IRRIGATION AGENCY. HE RETURNED TO GOVERNMENTIN JUNE 1950 AS UNDERSECRETARY MINISTRY OF ROADS AND IN 1951 HE ENTERED CABINET AS MINISTER OF ROADS. HE JOINED HIGH COUNCIL OF PLAN ORGANIZATION IN 1952, AND FOLLOWING COLLAPSE OF

MOSSADEQ GOVERNEMENT IN AUGUST 1953, HE MANAGED IRAN'S PLAN ORGANIZATION. HIS TERM OF OFFICE WAS ONLY TWO MONTHS AS RESULT OF HIS RELUCTANCE TO BREAK WITH MOSSADEQ'S MEN WHO HAD REMAINED IN GOVERNMENT

IN 1954 HE ENTERED SENATE FROM TEHRAN, LEADING OPPOSITION TO PM ZAHEDI. RETIRING FROM SENATE IN 1957, HE RETURNED TO CABINET AS MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES AND MINES. HE HELD OFFICE UNTIL AUGUST 1960, WHEN HE REPLACED EQBAL AS PM. DURING NINE MONTHS IN OFFICE SHARIFI-EMAMI SOUGHT GREATER INDEPENDENCE FOR PREMIERSHIP AND CONDUCTED 1961 ELECTIONS WHICH WERE SECOND ATTEMPT TO ELECT 20TH MAJLIS. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE WORKED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AFGHANISTAN AND USSR. HE FOUND ROUGH GOING DOMESTICALLY AND RESIGNED IN MAY 1961, OSTENSIBLY DUE TO CRITICISM OF HIS HANDLING OF TEACHERS STRIKE. IN 1962 HE WAS APPOINTED HEAD OF PAHLAVI FOUNDATION (PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATION FUNDED BY SALE OF CROWN LANDS). FOLLOWING YEAR HE RETURNED TO SENATE, WHERE HE WAS QUICKLEY ELECTED PRESIDENT, A POST HE HAS HELD UNTIL NOW, HE HAS HEADED SEVERAL SERVICE AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, HOLDING AS MANY AS ELEVEN PAYING JOBS AT ONE TIME.

2. NEVER ENTIRELY FORSAKING HIS ENGINEERING/INDUSTRIAL BACKGROUND, SHARIF-EMAMI RETAINED EXTENSIVE BUSINESS CONNECTIONS. INEVITABLY THESE HAVE LED TO CHARGES OF CORRUPTION, SPECIFICALLY OF SERVING BRITISH OR GERMAN

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INTERESTS. HE DAMAGED HIS REPUTATION WHEN IN DEFIANCE OF 1959 CONFLICT OF INTEREST LAW, HE REFUSED TO SURRENDER EITHER HIS BUSINESS INTERESTS OR HIS POST AS MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES.

3. HE HAS ALSO CLUNG TO HIS RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, AND HIS CREDIBILITY AS BROKER BETWEEN GOVERNEMENT AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAS BEEN ONE HIS GREATEST STRENGTHS. SHAH DELEGATED HIM IN 1970 TO EXPLAIN REFORMS TO SHIITE HEIRARCHY. HE HAS CRITICIZED USE OF FORCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES, TELLING EMBOFF IN 1965: "YOU CAN ANSER BOOKS WITH BOOKS, GUNS WITH GUNS, AND YOU CAN ONLY ANSWER MULLAHS WITH MULLAHS." CLERGY, HE ARGUED, MUST BE ASSOCIATED WITH REFORM PROGRAM. HE HAS REMAINED TRUSTED CONFIDANT OF SHAH, PLAYING KEY ROLE IN PERSUADING HIM TO ESTABLISH REGENCY COUNCIL IN 1967 TO PROVIDE FOR SUCCESSION.

4. DESPITE EARLY IMAGE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM, SHARIF-EMAMI DEVELOPED CLOSE RELATIONS WITH EMB. HIS PREMIERSHIP WAS MARKED BY EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SOVIET-IRAN RELATIONS, AND MUCH RUMORED RETURN AS PM IN MID 1960S WAS PRESUMED TO REPRESENT GOI RELAXING TIE WITH USG. TRUTH WAS PROBABLY

ALWAYS OTHERWISE, AND SHARIF-EMAMI BECAME USEFUL CONTACT FOR EMBASSY, TO POINT OF TAKING WEEKLY ENGLISH LESSONS FROM EMBOFF IN 1966-67. SINCE THAT TIME, HE HAS BEEN FRANK, FRIENDLY, AND HELPFUL TO SENIOR AMERICANS, BUT NOT EXTREMELY CLOSE TO EMBASSY OFFICIALS ON A REGULAR BASIS IN THE 1970'S. HE IS ONE OF FOUR LIVING HOLDERS OF IRAN'S ORDER OF THE TAJ, FIRST CLASS.

5. ENERGETIC AND RATHER STERN IN APPEARANCE, SHARIF-EMAMI IS AN AVID HORSEBACK RIDER AND MAINTAINS A LIVESTOCK FARM. WIDELY TRAVELED, INCLUDING TRIPS AS HEAD OF PARLIAMENTARY DELGATIONS, HE ENJOYS BROAD DISCUSSION OF WORLD AFFAIRS AS THEY AFFECT IRAN. HE IS MARRIED ANDHAS THREE CHILDREN. ONE OF HIS DAUGHTERS STUDIED AT OHIO WESLYAN AND COLUMBIA
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IN THE EARLY 1970'S. HE SPEAKS FARSI, ENGLISH, GERMAN, AND SOME SWEDISH AND RUSSIAN.
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